

R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

RE: THE ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner's indication of the allowability of the subject matter of claims 6, 7 and 13 is respectfully acknowledged.

New independent claim 19 has been added to recite the subject matter of allowable claim 6 in independent form, and new claims 20 and 21 have been added to recite the subject matter of allowable claims 7 and 13 depending from new independent claim 19.

In preparing new claims 19-21 some minor revisions have been made to the recitations in original claims 6, 7 and 13. In particular, it is noted that new claim 20 has been prepared to correctly recite that the third support member is disposed between the second combustor (rather than the second evaporator) and the reformer to support the second combustor (rather than the second evaporator), as shown in Fig. 3. However, no new matter has been added and no new issues with respect to patentability have been raised.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that new claims 19-21 are in condition for immediate allowance.

RE: THE REJECTED CLAIMS

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly recite the distinguishing features of the present invention whereby a reforming apparatus is provided which comprises a plurality of reactors each having an internal space for reacting fuel and each having a respective operating temperature, and a heat insulating package which contains the plurality of reactors. More specifically, claim 1 has been amended to more clearly recite that the heat insulating package comprises a plurality of sides including: only one support side which is provided with at least one support that: (i) includes at least one first passage hole for supplying the fuel to the reactors and at least one second passage hole for draining generated hydrogen from the reactors, and (ii) supports the plurality of reactors to be separated from an inner wall of the heat insulating package, and at least one non-support side which is not provided with the support. In addition, claim 1 has been amended to more clearly recite that the plurality of reactors are stacked upwardly in an increasing order of the respective operating temperatures from the one support side of the heat insulating package.

Still further, claims 3, 4, 6-8, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 17 have been amended to better accord with amended independent claim 1, as well as to make some minor grammatical improvements and/or to correct some minor antecedent basis problems. In particular, it

is noted that claim 4 has been amended to overcome the informality pointed out by the Examiner in item 1 on page 2 of the Office Action, and claim 7 has been amended to correctly recite that the third support member is disposed between the second combustor (rather than the second evaporator) and the reformer to support the second combustor (rather than the second evaporator), in a manner similar to new claim 20.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered and that the objection to claim 4 be withdrawn.

It is respectfully submitted, moreover, that the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 1 patentably distinguishes over US 2003/0054215 ("Doshi et al"), USP 6,159,434 ("Gonjo et al") and USP 6,423,945 ("Yokota"), taken singly or in any combination, under 35 USC 102 as well as under 35 USC 103.

Doshi et al discloses a system in which a fuel feed 112 for supplying fuel from a fuel storage tank 122 and tubing having an exhaust outlet 116 and an oxidant inlet 114 are connected to individually different sides of a thermal enclosure 110.

Significantly, in contrast to the structure disclosed in Doshi et al, according to the claimed present invention as recited in amended independent claim 1, only one side of the heat insulating package is provided with a support including the passage hole and supporting the plurality of reactors so that

they are spaced apart from the inner wall of the heat insulating package. That is, as recited in amended independent claims 1, the heat insulating package comprises a plurality of sides including only one support side which is provided with at least one support that: (i) includes at least one first passage hole for supplying the fuel to the reactors and at least one second passage hole for draining generated hydrogen from the reactors, and (ii) supports the plurality of reactors to be separated from an inner wall of the heat insulating package.

In addition, in contrast to the structure disclosed in Doshi et al, according to the claimed present invention as recited in amended independent claim 1, the plurality of reactors are stacked upwardly in an increasing order of the respective operating temperatures from the one support side of the heat insulating package.

Gonjo et al, moreover, does not disclose any heat insulating package enclosing the whole of the fuel reformer apparatus apparatus thereof, and also does not disclose, teach or suggest any arrangement of tubing provided for the fuel reformer apparatus supported in the heat insulating package.

Yokota, moreover, has merely been cited for the disclosure of a radiation reflecting layer formed out of Al and Ag, and for the disclosure of setting the internal pressure in a heat insulating package to 1 Pa or less.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that even if the teachings of Doshi et al, Gonjo et al and Yokota were combinable in the manner suggested by the Examiner, such combination would still not achieve or render obvious the features of the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 1 whereby the heat insulating package comprises a plurality of sides including only one support side which is provided with at least one support that: (i) includes at least one first passage hole for supplying the fuel to the reactors and at least one second passage hole for draining generated hydrogen from the reactors, and (ii) supports the plurality of reactors to be separated from an inner wall of the heat insulating package, and whereby the plurality of reactors are stacked upwardly in an increasing order of the respective operating temperatures from the one support side of the heat insulating package.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention as recited in amended independent claim 1, and each of claims 2-17 depending therefrom, patentably distinguishes over all of the cited references, taken singly or in any combination, under 35 USC 102 as well as under 35 USC 103, along with allowable claims 19-21.

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Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

Application Serial No. 10/806,821
Response to Office Action

Customer No. 01933

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

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